

School Attendance Policy

Varna Community Primary School



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Termly review and update by Governing Body Attendance sub-committee July 2019

1. Introduction

1.1 Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

1.2 Varna Community Primary School believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

1.3 Varna Community Primary School values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

1.4 Varna Community Primary School recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

2. Legal Framework

2.1 Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

2.2 A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

2.3 Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

2.4 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

2.5 The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

3. Categorising absence

All absences from school follow the local guidance relating to absence codes.

3.1 Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

3.2 Absence can only be authorised by the headteacher and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

3.3 Parents must advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return where possible. Parent/carers are asked to provide daily updates to school of a child's recovery unless there are significant reasons why this information cannot be provided, e.g. where a child is hospitalised etc.

3.4 Absence will be categorised as follows:

3.5 Illness Parents will be asked to provide medical evidence to allow the head teacher to authorise absence where appropriate. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc. There may be on occasions, and solely at the discretion of the head teacher in conjunction with the school attendance team incidents of absence where a parent may not have the above evidence and which may still be recorded as an illness. Where this situation is repeated or prolonged then the criteria for the illness code to be used will be applied.

3.6 Medical/Dental Appointments Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils must attend school for part of the day. Parents must show the appointment card to school.

3.7 Other Authorised Circumstances This relates to where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances.

3.8 Excluded (No alternative provision made) Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

3.9 Parents who need to take their child out of school during term time due to exceptional circumstances must send a written request to the head teacher. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as **unauthorised**.

3.9.1 All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing outlining the conditions of leave granted.

3.9.2 If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parents has not been made or received, school may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013. This means that the child will lose their school place.

3.9.3 If the permission to take leave is not granted and the parent takes their child out of school the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may request the local

authority issue a Penalty Notice or consider other legal sanctions including prosecution in the magistrates court.

3.10 Religious Observance Varna Community Primary School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration by written request by the parent of authorised absence. All such requests will be considered on a case by case basis by the Headteacher and a range of contributing factors will be taken into account when reaching a decision.

3.11 Where requests for absence are made the Head teachers decision will be given in a timely fashion and will be final.

3.12 Traveller Absence It is expected that Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

3.12.1 To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. This is only when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

3.12.2 When in or around Manchester, if a family can reasonably travel back to their Base School (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

3.12.3 Varna Community Primary School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily while away from their base school, in such cases, the pupil's school place at Varna Community Primary School will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

3.12.4 Varna Community Primary School can only effectively operate as the child's base school if it is engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates

3.12.5 Varna Community Primary School will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling for work or trade purposes and has given indication that they intend to return.

3.12.6 Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer based distance learning that is time evidenced

3.12.7 Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil and appropriate statutory action may be undertaken.

3.13 Late Arrival Registration begins at 8.55, pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late. The register will close at 9.25 (*no more than thirty minutes after the opening of the register*) pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late, (code U) this is not authorised and will count as an absence for that school session and statutory action may be taken where appropriate.

3.13.1 On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

3.13.2 The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment. If this is case then evidence of this appointment should be presented.

3.13.3 The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause.

3.14 Unauthorised absence - Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the head teacher/principal.

3.14.1 Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Illness which is not related to the child – for example parents/carers are too ill to bring them to school
- Family holidays

4. Deletions from the Register

4.1 In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil

- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil

4.2 Varna Community Primary School will follow Manchester City Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Varna Community Primary School believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community. As such, the Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Identify a member of the governing body to lead on attendance matters
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Agree school attendance targets and submit these to the Local Authority within the agreed timescale each year and where appropriate link these to the Performance Management of Senior Leadership within the school
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governing Body Meetings
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority or Department for Education as required and on time
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance
- Ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

5.2 The Leadership Team will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues

- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Education as required and on time
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Governing Body and on a half termly basis to the lead governor for attendance
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

5.3 Class teachers and other support staff where appropriate will

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
 - Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
 - Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
 - Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation
 - Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
 - Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
 - Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
 - Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
 - Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

5.4 Request that Parents will:

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a written explanation where necessary
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the Doctors, Dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home

- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, home work, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child out of school during term-time, where this is unavoidable, and only in exceptional circumstances send a written leave request to the Head Teacher.

6. Using Attendance Data

6.1 Pupil's attendance will be monitored and may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

6.2 Every half term the Attendance team will provide all class teachers, Phase Leaders and SLT with attendance data for that period for each pupil in that class or area of the school. The list will be presented in numerical descending order with the highest attenders at the top; every pupil will be colour coded as indicated below:

GREEN	pupils with attendance between 100% and 97%
AMBER - GREEN	pupils with attendance between 96% and 94%
RED - AMBER	pupils with attendance between 93% and 91%
RED	pupils with attendance below 90%

6.3 An arrow next to the pupil's name will indicate if their attendance has improved, stayed the same or deteriorated.

6.4 The Senior Leadership Team will receive a complete set of data.

6.5 Phase Leaders will receive a complete set of data for their Phase of the school.

6.6 This pupil level data will be used to trigger school action as set out in the escalation of intervention (Appendix 1).

6.7 Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

6.8 Varna Community Primary School will share attendance data with the Department for Education and the local authority as required.

6.9 All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

7. Support Systems

7.1 School recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

7.2 Varna Community Primary School also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

7.3 The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used could include:

- First response contact each day
- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Attendance panels
- Parenting contracts
- Attendance report cards
- Referrals to support agencies
- Learning mentors
- Pupil Voice Activities
- Friendship groups
- PSHE
- Family learning
- Reward systems
- Time limited part time time-tables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Reintegration support packages

7.4 Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

7.5 Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, Varna Community Primary School will consider the use of legal sanctions.

8. Legal Sanctions

8.1 Prosecution Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

8.1.1 Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

8.1.2 A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of three months.

8.1.3 Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are Parenting Contracts, Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

8.2 Parenting Contracts (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

8.2.1 The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

8.2.2 The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should parents fail to carry out agreed actions.

8.2.3 Parenting Contracts will be used in accordance with Manchester City Council's Parenting Contract Protocol.

8.3 Penalty Notices (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A pupil is absent from school and the absence has not been authorised by the school
- A pupil has accrued unauthorised absence without reasons provided and/or accepted as exceptional by the headteacher/principal.

8.3.1 A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £120 fine is paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days of the date the Notice was issued.

8.3.2 Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

8.3.3 Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with Manchester City Council's Penalty Notice Protocol.

Appendix 1

Escalation of Attendance Interventions

GREEN pupils with attendance between 100% to 97%

Parents will receive a letter home congratulating them on their child's good/excellent attendance at least termly

Pupils will be rewarded within the school's merit system.

At class level pupils attendance is celebrated and rewarded each week by a member of the school Family Support and Attendance Team.

Classes are encouraged to review their own attendance against that of others in school in order to win the class attendance prize each half term and gain an appropriate class reward.

A whole school incentive takes place for pupils with 100% attendance at the end of each term.

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will monitor the effectiveness of interventions. This will be used to review and inform whole school strategies and will also have links to performance management.

Where there are concerns around attendance and where improvement have not occurred, parents will be invited to a meeting where the possible outcomes will be:

- All parties confident that issues have been resolved and the attendance will improve.
- Parenting contract agreed
- Penalty Notice monitoring period commences
- Agree a review date
- Other actions deemed necessary by the head teacher in conjunction with the Family Support and Attendance team

Where parents fail to attend the meeting without a satisfactory reason and unauthorised absence has occurred, the penalty notice monitoring period will automatically commence.

The Family Support Team will be responsible for all action at this level and will record all intervention and outcomes where relevant

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will monitor the effectiveness of interventions. This will be used to review and inform whole school strategies.

Where these interventions have already been implemented and have had unsatisfactory impact, the parent will be invited to an Attendance Panel where the possible outcomes will be:

- Complete a EHA leading to multi agency support
- Refer to the Local Authority to initiate legal proceedings

Where a parent fails to attend the meeting without providing a satisfactory reason, a minimum of two home visits with the purpose to engage with the parent will be carried out prior to referral to the Local Authority.

The Family Support and Attendance team will be responsible for all action at this level and will record all intervention and outcomes.

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will monitor the effectiveness of interventions. This will be used to review and inform whole school.

RED pupils with attendance below 90%

Pupils who have attendance below 90% are considered to be persistently absent from school. To ensure that intervention is focused and meets the needs of individuals, pupils will be grouped in to one of the following categories:

- Looked After Children and Children on the Child Protection Register
- Special Educational Needs
- Long term non attendance
- Parental support/needs eg parental drug use, young carers, domestic violence
- Offended or have an Anti Social Behaviour Order
- Other groups as necessary within the school context

Each grouping will be monitored by the School Attendance Team who will:

- Obtain records of previous contact and interventions and escalate accordingly
- Will ensure that there is regular contact with the parents/carers to discuss any arising issues and to provide feedback on their child's attendance, behaviour and academic progress.
- Review and co-ordinate school resources to support the pupil's attendance and any additional needs
- Be the key contact person for any external agency working with the pupil
- Input into whole school strategies to address the needs of pupils

The Family Support and Attendance team will be responsible for all action at this level and will record all intervention and outcomes. Records will be copied to a member of the Senior Leadership Team and headteacher at least half termly.

The headteacher will report on attendance termly to the Governing Body.